

turn. We in the Congress must do everything we can to prevent this disastrous policy from going into effect.

This is a bad deal for U.S. national security and for the Cuban opposition, and it is a sweetheart deal for the repressive Cuban regime.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, there is always a great deal of excitement surrounding a new Congress and a new year. One area that has been very encouraging is the focus on rebuilding and renewing America. That was where we left off in the last Congress, frustrated by an inability to produce a 6-year reauthorization, largely because of an inability for Congress to address meaningfully how it would be funded. This continues a struggle of almost two decades, as we have not increased the gas tax or developed a viable, sustainable, adequate alternative.

It is widely recognized that America is falling apart and falling behind. Our infrastructure, once the envy of the world, now has put us at a second-tier status, with America at risk of falling ever further behind.

The deplorable state of our infrastructure is actually costing Americans far more to endure the damage to their cars and the delays to their lives through congestion than simply funding an alternative and fixing it.

It is encouraging that the administration and people in both parties, in both Chambers, might be prepared to address the issue anew. There are some short-term stopgap solutions which would nowhere near solve the problem but nudge us in the right direction.

In the Senate there is bipartisan interest in and openness to a comprehensive solution including the gas tax. Senators BOB CORKER and his partner CHRIS MURPHY have been champions. Senator TOM CARPER continues his leadership and advocacy for the gas tax solution. Senator JOHN THUNE, a key Republican leader, has signaled his openness to the gas tax, which is the simplest, most logical, and most effective solution.

Even the problematic proposal to use dynamic scoring to evaluate budget proposals could make a difference for the prospect of solving this huge problem for America if it would be applied in the spirit of dynamic scoring.

The Standard & Poor's research report, "U.S. Infrastructure Investment: A Chance to Reap More Than We Sow," pointed out the overwhelming economic impact in terms of jobs created, economic benefits that actually exceeded the direct amount invested, and long-term deficit reduction of \$200 million for every \$1.2 billion invested. This should be one of the easiest economic decisions we ever make.

In an era of low interest rates, gasoline prices falling dramatically, when there are still hundreds of thousands of people ready to go to work at family wage jobs rebuilding this country, the economic case has never been stronger.

By all means, let's evaluate all of the proposals. Let's expand the discussion. Let's look at the leadership of States around the country that are stepping up to do their part. State, local, and private investment all have a role to play, to be sure, but recognize that the 25 percent of infrastructure funding that comes from the Federal Government plays a critical role. Let this Congress give America a solution that is sustainable, not one that would put us back in the same fix in a year or two or even sooner.

Let's have a revenue source that is dedicated so that we can begin on longer-term projects that demand multimodal, multistate, multiyear solutions and that is large enough to give us a long overdue 6-year comprehensive reauthorization. Stable, dedicated, big enough to do the job—this is a test that the new Congress and administration should meet to revitalize our economy and rebuild and renew this great country.

At a time of dramatically falling oil and gas prices, when the public is suffering from Congress dithering on our transportation and other infrastructure needs, there will never be a better time to heed the advice of President Ronald Reagan 33 years ago in his Thanksgiving Day radio address to the country to raise the gas tax and put Americans to work fixing the problem that has only gotten worse. It was good advice then. It is good advice today.

MENTAL HEALTH REFORMS NEEDED

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. ROSELEHTINEN). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. MURPHY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Madam Speaker, sadly, each day we read sensationalized headlines that boggle the mind, but here is the rest of the story. In New York, headlines read a 30-year-old man has been charged with killing his father who founded a hedge fund because his allowance had been cut.

The rest of the story? He had been in a mental health decline for years. A friend told the press, clearly their son had serious mental illness. There were stories about strange things that he had been doing in the past few years, really erratic behavior. Another newspaper reports the man was off his medication.

In Florida, headlines read a 22-year-old man cut off his mother's head with an ax last week because of her nagging about daily chores.

The rest of the story? This man had been diagnosed with schizophrenia and had been involuntarily held under the State's civil commitment law but re-

leased. Despite his illness and past commitments, he was no longer in treatment because Florida, like most States, requires a person to be imminently homicidal or suicidal for treatment.

In Pennsylvania a former marine killed his ex-wife and five of her family members last month because of "family issues."

The rest of the story? The marine had been evaluated and cleared of having suicidal or homicidal tendencies by a Department of Veterans Affairs psychiatrist just days before, a decision we now see was wrong.

Each week there are half a dozen new reports that demand more than a sensationalized headline because the rest of the story tells the real story. Severe mental illness is a brain disease; it is not an attitude or a lifestyle choice. Psychosis, schizophrenia, and other serious mental illnesses involve disruption in typical brain functioning which translates into a very specific set of disturbing behaviors. This is not a condemnation of the mentally ill nor a criticism of those who have severe brain disorders.

Hallucinations, voices, visions, and paranoia lead to actions that aren't grounded in reasoned choices. For those who don't have a brain disease it is hard to understand, and it is unnerving to think about, but when we understand that behaviors are symptomatic of what is occurring in the brain, we can address them without judgment, just like other medical diseases and other lifesaving treatments.

The distorted reasoning why an individual acts out in a violent manner or takes the lives of innocent victims on a mass scale are complex and not as simple as a response to a mother's nagging. Sadly, in all cases I mentioned today, the families knew there was something wrong with their mentally ill loved one but they were ignored and frustrated or turned away by a broken system of State and Federal laws that create walls and barriers instead of access to care.

Parents know there is a problem, and even when they have the resources to get a child help, the family efforts are thwarted by this broken system, and they are not getting effective, evidence-based treatment. And communities rarely have the appropriate programs, resources, and doctors to deal with the most severe cases.

In the face of this growing crisis, we must approach serious mental illness as a medical emergency that engages a community and medical response to help people and families trapped in this system that is misguided, in denial, and disconnected.

We can change this tragic pattern, and that is why I will be reintroducing the Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act.

□ 1015

My legislation makes sure the most severely mentally ill have access to